

are so clearly without policy justification that they should be repealed.

The legislation we are introducing today will repeal the two five-year limitations for taxable years beginning after this year. For revenue reasons, the legislation will phase out the 35 percent limitation over seven years. This bill should be part of any simplification or tax relief legislation that may be enacted.

ORGAN DONATION

HON. STEVE ISRAEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 7, 2001

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker. So that New York States' recently established Organ and Tissue Donor Registry might be better publicized and promoted,

And so that the public might be better educated on the dire need for organ donation,

I will enter this inspiring article about New York State Assemblyman Jim Conte in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

JIM CONTE LEADING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

(By Cheryl Johnston)

While he routinely makes a difference in the lives of many people in the state of New York, Jim has the greatest impact on four particular people who live in the town of Huntington Station—his wife Debbie and his children Sarah, Jeffrey, and Samantha. In the ups and downs of political life, it is Jim's family which keeps him anchored. He knows they're most important in life.

Jim got sick before he met Debbie, when he was in his first year of college. Because he'd always been healthy, he was surprised when his doctor said glomerular nephritis was responsible for his swollen feet and sent him home from school. Jim missed more than half of that freshman year, but his health stabilized again. He resumed his studies, acquired an internship with the New York State legislature in Albany and completed his degree in economics. Life was on a roll again.

After graduation, Jim returned to Albany to work in various positions in government, including working for Assemblywoman Toni Retalliata. When she sought another office and won, Jim decided to run in the special election for her Assembly seat. He had just one month to campaign and give it his all. He attended campaign events and walked door to door to meet the Long Island constituents. He worked from sun up to sun down, ignoring the fact that he was retaining fluid and that he had a chest cold he couldn't seem to shake. Before the election even took place, he ended up in the hospital with kidney failure and pneumonia.

Debbie, who was dating Jim then, remembers: "I was shocked to see how quickly he had become run down. His breathing was so labored that I could actually hear it from down the hallway. He was very weak and his color was bad. He hadn't urinated for a cou-

ple of days. We got him to the hospital, where he was intubated immediately. He came close to dying. With the special election underway, he'd just kept going and going. His health had taken a back seat—and he almost paid with his life. Ever since, his priorities have changed. Now he pays attention to his health."

While Jim was in the hospital, people in his party, community, and family rallied around him, carrying on the campaign without him. "I still remember walking into the headquarters, knowing they had pulled me through. It was a wonderful feeling."

The feeling was wonderful and the win exciting, but Jim's health was another story. He was on hemodialysis and very weak, but if he wanted to hold onto his new position of Assemblyman, he couldn't take a break. The next regular election for his seat was only eight months after the special election. He put in long hours both as an assembly and as a candidate, fitting in dialysis sessions either early in the morning or in the evening.

When his healthcare team initially mentioned a transplant Jim was cautious but, after consideration, he agreed to the procedure. Only six weeks after his name was placed on the list at Albany Medical Center, a matching kidney was available. In March of 1989 he received a donor kidney and recuperated well. He had a 13-day hospital stay, which included a small bout of rejection. To the amazement of his colleagues in the Assembly, Jim returned to the legislative chambers by budget time in April.

Jim later found out that his donor was a young woman named Ashley. "In the midst of that family's suffering, with the loss of their wife and daughter, they made the decision to donate. For that, I'm eternally grateful." He later showed his gratitude by giving his first daughter the middle name "Ashley."

It didn't take long for him to gain back his strength and continue his productive life. And six months post-transplant, Debbie and Jim got married. Debbie had a special perspective of the medical challenges Jim faced because she was a pharmacist and also because brother-in-law, Donald, had received a successful heart transplant six years earlier. This knowledge enhanced Debbie's ability to support Jim as a wife and helpmate.

In 1991 they had Sarah Ashley. Two years later they were blessed with the birth of their second child, Jeffrey. But the tide turned less than two months later, when Jim's nephritis returned. With weeks, by mid-August of 1993, Jim's transplanted kidney was failing and he was back on dialysis.

Jim was put on the transplant list, but this time his wait was 18 months. During the difficult wait, Jim kept up his regular work schedule. While the legislature was in session, he went to early morning dialysis sessions with a fellow Assemblyman, Angelo DelToro from Spanish Harlem, and then returned to the Assembly. "The two of us put human faces on the organ shortage problem. We made others in New York's state government and beyond see that the problem was real—and that, in itself, had an impact."

On December 20th Jim got the call that an organ was available and underwent his second transplant surgery, this time at the

hands of Dr. David Conti. It proved to be a success. Sadly, Angelo DelToro died of complications of dialysis while Jim was still in the hospital.

Since the second transplant, Jim and Debbie had a third child, Samantha, now two. Jim's priority at home is appreciating his three children and his wife. Another priority in Jim's life is supporting the cause of organ donation and transplantation so that others might receive the gift of a second chance at life.

"I do anything I can for that cause," he says. "I'm in a unique position to bring the message to those who make decisions. I tell others about my success and the overwhelming need for more organs. I try to educate the public through interviews on TV, radio and in the newspaper. I include the message in newsletters to my constituents."

Jim has sponsored a number of bills designed to educate the public and reward those who choose to be donors. Frank Taft, director for the Center of Donation and Transplant comments, "Assemblyman Conte has never forgotten that his transplant began with a gift. In the Assembly, he has worked diligently to try to pass legislation to remember those who gave this most precious gift and to promote bills that will lead to increased organ donation."

At times, bills have gotten mired down in party politics, but Jim never gives up. "I just get smarter," he explains. For example, he couldn't get enough support in the majority party (he's with the minority party) to pass legislation creating a statewide organ donor registry. So he worked administratively instead of legislatively. He joined Governor Pataki's transplant council, which actually was successful in establishing a statewide-computerized donor registry. When another piece of organ donation legislation was killed in the healthcare committee, Jim gave the bill to a member of the majority party, who could gain more support from within his party. This selfless move resulted in the successful passage of the legislation under someone else's name.

While he's concerned about effectiveness within the hallowed halls of state government, Jim is also concerned about the effectiveness of his own transplant. "I try to take care of myself," he says. "I follow a low-fat diet, with lots of fruits and veggies. I exercise—either at the gym, on the treadmill or walking outside."

He's also careful about adhering to his medication regimen. "I've never really had a problem with my transplant medications. I made a perfect switch from Sandimmune to Neoral. And I get my medications faithfully each moth from Stadtlanders. It's a fantastic service."

Through his actions and through his life, Jim Conte demonstrates that one man can make a difference. But his wife Debbie doesn't look at him and see what he's done; she looks at him and sees who he is. She explains, "He's everything good. He's easy going, a great dad, a loving husband. He's very caring of his community and family. He's very dedicated." No wonder this man is a leader.